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ACEND Virtual Town Hall Meeting  
September 24, 2025, 11:00 a.m. Central Time

Host/Presenter: Rayane AbuSabha, PhD, RD  
ACEND Executive Director



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**Webinar Recording Link:**

<https://vimeo.com/1122203295>

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214 participants attended the town hall.

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**Summary of the Town Hall:**

The September 24<sup>th</sup> Town Hall presented information about additions to ACEND services designed to provide stand-alone **Dietetic Internships (DIs) that are unable to affiliate with an academic program** and therefore will be unable to deliver the 2027 Standards designated academic competencies, with an option to continue their operation. While the primary purpose is providing a required pathway to the DIs who are unable to affiliate, these services will be **available to, but optional for, other ACEND-accredited programs as well.**

**The new services suggested are:**

**ACEND-approval of Bridge Programs:** ACEND will approve coursework of a full graduate degree, packages of courses, or individual modules offered by an institution of higher learning that include the designated academic graduate level competencies and performance indicators required to complete ACEND-accredited supervised practice programs. DIs without academic affiliation can require applicants to complete an ACEND-approved bridge program(s) to be completed prior to admission or in conjunction with their DI program.

**ACEND-provided Prior Assessment of Learning (PAL):** ACEND will assess prospective student degree(s), coursework, and/or work experiences. After review, ACEND will provide the student with a report similar to the report by companies that evaluate international credential evaluation education such as WES (World Education Service). The student submits the report to the program. As with the credential evaluation education reports, it remains up to the program to accept or reject any determination by ACEND.

**Background and Questions about the bridge program and ACEND's definition of the bridge program**

*Background*

Dietetic Internships, especially those located outside academic institutions, are post-baccalaureate professional practicums that are not recognized nor approved to deliver academic content. DI programs affiliated with academic institutions will be able to resolve this issue by integrating the ACEND designated academic

Competencies (C) and Performance Indicators (PIs) within the affiliated graduate academic program. At this early stage in the process, ACEND is using the bridge program concept as a solution for DIs that cannot affiliate with academic institutions. ACEND is establishing an arm to review and approve graduate programs' curricula for the academic C&PIs, which students can complete prior to or in conjunction with a DI program that is unable to affiliate with an academic institution.

### *What Is a Bridge Program?*

A bridge program provides transitional support to help students or professionals advance their education or careers by filling a gap in knowledge or skills, often with a specialized pathway to a higher-level degree or qualification. The bridge programs are designed to give students the information and skills necessary to facilitate or "bridge" their successful transition. Examples include summer bridge programs that prepare high school graduates for college, and LPN or RN programs that help licensed practical nurses become registered nurses.<sup>1</sup>

### *What will be ACEND's Bridge Programs*

ACEND will utilize the concept of a bridge program to meet the designated academic C&PIs required in dietetics under the proposed 2027 Accreditation Standards. Under ACEND's definition, bridge programs can take on many forms and must be reviewed and approved by ACEND:

- An entire master's degree program that incorporates the ACEND designated academic C&PIs.
- A single course or multiple courses that meet a subset or all the ACEND designated academic C&PIs. Completing this coursework is not intended to lead to a master's degree but to fill the gap in the C&PIs needed to enter a supervised practice program.
- A non-credit module that meets a subset of the ACEND-designated academic C&PIs or all these C&PIs.

The cornerstone of ACEND's bridge program is to build the list of the academic programs that have been approved to deliver the ACEND designated academic C&PIs. Once this list of bridge programs is published on the ACEND website, dietetics programs will be able to direct their applicants and students to these approved programs to fulfill necessary requirements.

### *Who Can Apply to ACEND to Offer a Bridge Program?*

ACEND will approve bridge programs from academic institutions, including colleges, universities, academic hospitals, and other academic centers recognized as institutions of higher education. The bridge program must be offered by a graduate program, such as a master's degree program.

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<sup>1</sup> Denise M Connelly, Nicole A Guitart, Andrea N Atkinson, Sarah M Janssen, Nancy Snobelen. Learnings from nursing bridging education programs: A scoping review. *Nurse Educ Pract.* 2023 Nov;73:103833. doi: 10.1016/j.nepr.2023.103833.

Marilyn Svejda, Janet Goldberg, Maureen Belden, Kathleen Potempa, Margaret Calarco. Building the Clinical Bridge to Advance Education, Research, and Practice Excellence. *Nurs Res Pract.* 2012 Mar 22;2012:826061. doi: 10.1155/2012/826061

Christine L Covell, Marie-Douce Primeau, Isabelle St-Pierre. Internationally educated nurses in Canada: Perceived benefits of bridging programme participation. *International Nurse Review.* 2028 February; 65(1). DOI:10.1111/inr.12430

Katelyn M Cooper, Michael Ashley, Sara E Brownell. A Bridge to Active Learning: A Summer Bridge Program Helps Students Maximize Their Active-Learning Experiences and the Active-Learning Experiences of Others *CBE Life Sci Educ.* 2017 Spring;16(1):ar17. doi: 10.1187/cbe.16-05-0161

Brittany C Bradford, Margaret E Beier, Frederick L Oswald. A Meta-analysis of University STEM Summer Bridge Program Effectiveness. *CBE Life Sci Educ.* 2021 Summer;20(2):ar21. doi: 10.1187/cbe.20-03-0046

Master's degrees that are approved by ACEND as bridge programs will be able to issue an ACEND certificate recognizing the student as having completed the program. This certificate will be collected by the supervised practice program.

#### *What Format Will ACEND Use to Review and Verify the Bridge Programs?*

ACEND does not seek to accredit the bridge programs; instead, we anticipate that the review will be a condensed review focused mostly on the curriculum that will contain the designated academic C & PIs. Details regarding the format and frequency of this review are currently under development.

#### **Questions about the ACEND's Prior Assessment of Learning (PAL) Services**

##### *What Is ACEND's Prior Assessment of Learning (PAL) Service?*

ACEND's Prior Assessment of Learning (PAL) is a plan for a service to students. Prospective students will have the ability to reach out to ACEND for a PAL analysis of their degree(s), coursework, and/or work experiences. After reviewing the student's portfolio, ACEND will provide them with a report similar to the report by agencies that evaluate international credential evaluation education such as WES (World Education Service). The student then submits the report to the program. As with the credential evaluation education reports, it remains up to the program to accept or reject any determination by ACEND.

##### *How Does ACEND's Proposed PAL Process Impact Different Program Types?*

ACEND's PAL service will act as a pathway for applicants or prospective students to assist them in entering dietetics programs. While the primary purpose is providing a required pathway to the DIs who are unable to affiliate with a master's degree, these services will be **available but optional for other ACEND-accredited programs as well.**

#### **Questions from Town Hall Attendees and ACEND Responses**

*As a free-standing DI, we require a Graduate Degree Upon Admission. To remain a stand-alone, shouldn't it be placed upon the academic institutions to ensure these are met, and not the DI?*

*ACEND Response:* DI programs cannot be responsible for academic content; therefore, it is not the responsibility of the DI program to ensure the C&PIs that are designated in the academic setting are met. The following programs and/or entities are those that are tasked with this responsibility:

- The master's degree program that has been reviewed and approved by ACEND for meeting these C&PIs (as part of reviewing an MS/DI or approving a bridge program). We anticipate that ACEND will allow bridge programs to issue a certificate of recognition to the student to hand to the DI program. The process should be similar to that of the DPD verification statement.
- ACEND through its prior assessed learning (PAL) service
- The CP program (which will include the GP programs)

*Our institution offers a DPD as well as MS degrees in Nutritional Sciences and Food Science. In order to be eligible for a DI, we would have to have our MS programs accredited or create a bridge program to be completed along with one of the MS programs, correct?*

*ACEND Response:* Your program is in an excellent position. The DPD will not need to change. If you choose to have the MS degrees in Nutritional Sciences and Food Science be approved as a bridge program by ACEND as providing the designated academic competencies, this will allow the DPD graduates to complete the MS program and apply directly to a DI program of their choosing, as they currently do.

*Will MS/DI programs still be allowed to operate but will need to be approved by ACEND first?*

*ACEND Response:* DIs that are affiliated with a master's degree program will continue to operate with relatively minor adjustments. The affiliated master's program curriculum must be reviewed and approved by ACEND for the ACEND Designated Academic C&PIs. ACEND aims to make this focused review process as simple and streamlined as possible.

*If we are a MS/DI and already clearly have the new academic C&PI in our graduate curriculum, will we need to have our students go through this new "bridge" pipeline?*

*ACEND Response:* Master's or other graduate degrees affiliated with DI programs must secure ACEND's approval for the designated academic C&PIs. Once approved as a bridge program, the affiliated master's degree will serve in that capacity. Please note that DI programs will continue to only be able to accept students who have earned their DPD verification statement, which remains true for all DI programs.

*Clarifying- while programs can still perform their own PAL for practice-based competencies, stand-alone programs who partner with an outside MS- we would still need the ACEND bridge approval for those academic competencies (\*unless the MS degree has already been approved by ACEND as a bridge program?)?*

*ACEND Response:* That is correct. Master's programs need ACEND approval as a bridge program for the designated academic C&PIs.

*What does the review process for MS programs involve? Does it require accreditation?*

*ACEND Response:* The review process for the bridge programs will not lead to accreditation. ACEND continues to work the details for the review process; however, it is expected to be a simpler and more streamlined process compared to accreditation.

*Many posts asked about having a specific type of master's degree and expressed concerns for DPD students who are being advised now that any master's degree is fine.*

*ACEND Response:* Under the 2027 Standards, the proposed definition of what type of master's degree will be acceptable incorporates all dietetics-related degrees including public health, foodservice management, and other related fields where the RDN works.

- ACEND conducted a review of its accredited programs that provide a master's degrees and found that 100% were nutrition-related.
- The decision to limit the master's degree was not based on the C&PIs to be completed within the academic setting. Instead, it is intended to meet the future needs of the dietetics profession.

For example, a master's degree in "anything" limits the ability of dietitians to be approved for billing and coding.

- Programs under the 2027 standards will have a nutrition-related master's degree or will have to achieve the nutrition-related academic C&PIs before eligibility to take the RDN exam. Therefore, students who enter an ACEND-accredited program under the 2022 Accreditation Standards should be able to complete their program as well as their dietetics journey.

*This new process seems much more complex. Are there future plans to streamline this?*

*ACEND Response:*

- Entry into dietetics is complicated, especially for second-degree applicants or post-baccs and for international applicants. Daily, we witness applicants who are discouraged by these complicated pathways and turn away from dietetics. ACEND hopes that this service will significantly streamline the process for these applicants, where ACEND becomes a one-stop shop guiding them through the steps. As always, ACEND will continue to explore possible ideas for further streamlining and welcome all feedback to support improvement.
- We do not anticipate that this process will greatly impact DPD students. ACEND will approve the curricula of the master's degrees that are affiliated with DIs to act as bridge programs, and these DIs can continue to accept DPD graduates similar to the current practice.
- For DPD graduates who wish to complete their graduate degree before applying to a DI program, the list of ACEND-approved graduate-level bridge programs will be available on the ACEND website. DPD graduates can apply to these programs the same way as they would for any other graduate degree program. We anticipate that having a list of approved master's degree bridge programs will facilitate the process for DPD graduates.

*A number of attendees questioned whether programs would continue to be able to conduct their own Prior Learning Assessment of applicants.*

*ACEND Response:* CP, GP, and DPD programs will always maintain the ability to conduct their own PAL for their own program content. DI programs also will continue to maintain the ability to conduct PAL for the C&PIs designated for the practicum setting. ACEND anticipates the following changes to this process, mostly impacting DI programs:

- DI programs **cannot** conduct PAL for the designated academic C&PIs.
- DI programs affiliated with a master's degree that has been approved by ACEND for providing the designated academic C&PIs are able to have the master's program faculty conduct the PAL on the academic C&PIs.

*How will this translate to the DICAS application platform? Will students be required to reach out to ACEND to identify if bridge programs need to be completed prior to being able to apply to stand alone DI programs?*

*ACEND Response:* The details for this proposed model are in progress and ACEND will continue to share its plans with programs and seek feedback. ACEND does not anticipate that students will be required to reach out to ACEND first. We will work with DICAS and the Dietetics Application Committee to ensure DI programs have the information needed from applicants.

*When we review applicants through the DICAS portal, will it be clear what additional coursework needs to be completed by each applicant? That seems like it may significantly impact our decision in choosing our intern class based on how many bridge modules they still need to complete*

*ACEND Response:* ACEND will work with DICAS and the Dietetics Application Committee to ensure DI programs have the information needed for applicants.

### **Impact on Programs and Need for a DPD Verification Statement**

*Two posts were concerned about the different admission standards (DPD for DI but not CP/GP) that may put MS+DI at a disadvantage to the CP/GP and questioned why DIs continue to require the DPD verification statement.*

*ACEND Response:* DI programs are professional in nature and are not recognized as academic institutions or academic programs. DIs cannot deliver academic content, confer degrees, or conduct PAL evaluations on academic coursework. The scope of DIs is limited to professional training and does not include assessment of academic competencies. This represents the core difference between CPs/GPs and DI programs and the reason why the DPD verification statement remains a required pre-requisite to the DI. Unlike DIs, CPs and GPs can deliver the DPD content and/or perform PAL on the DPD coursework.

*Will the DPD VS be required for ALL students now? DPD needed before CP?*

*ACEND Response:* The DPD verification statement is NOT required to enter a CP but will continue to be required as a prerequisite for all DI programs.

*Would co-enrollment in a bridge program for graduate level competencies and a DI program for a student with a graduate degree and DPD VS be allowed?*

*ACEND Response:* The DPD verification statement is a prerequisite to entering the DI program. Students in an internship may complete their bridge program (master's degree or module) at the same time as the DI program.

*Is the option of a DI program requiring a Master's degree as an admission requirement still going to be available?*

*ACEND Response:* Under the proposed 2027 Standards, the option for a DI program to require a master's degree will continue to be available. The applicant can complete an approved master's degree bridge program, or they may opt to use ACEND's PAL service to complete the requirements prior to applying to the DI program.

*With the new standards, if we have an ACEND accredited masters program, will a DPD now be required for admission? It looks like there are only competencies that can be assessed at the undergraduate level. Can we assess them at the graduate level as we do now with FEM programs?*

*ACEND Response:* CPs (which will also include GPs under the 2027 Standards) can continue as they have under the 2022 Standards. A DPD verification statement is NOT required for CPs. CPs must demonstrate how they will cover all the required C&PIs through prerequisites or courses they offer.

*This year alone, we have lost more than 10 interested students who simply did not want to pursue the DPD VS (due to conflicting or lack of PD responses) in order to stay in the area and complete our DI.*

*ACEND Response:* ACEND is often made aware of situations where prospective applicants reach out to multiple programs but receive no response or an inadequate assessment of their academic and professional experiences. As a result, the dietetics profession is losing many qualified and motivated individuals. One of the primary purposes of ACEND's PAL service is to support second-degree students, particularly those who do not hold a DPD verification statement, by providing a clear and consistent pathway. Through PAL, ACEND can serve as a centralized resource, guiding these applicants in collaboration with DI programs to ensure they receive appropriate academic evaluation and direction.

*From a student's perspective, it appears that this new process may push students to the CPs(GPs). This will lead to further decreasing applicants to the DI programs and their sustainability. This bridge does appear to be an option, but the benefits or appeal to students to apply to a DI are a concern.*

*ACEND Response:* Slots available in CP and GP programs can accommodate less than 25% of students applying to dietetics. DI programs continue to provide the majority of available slots for dietetics training. Furthermore, DI programs that affiliate with master's degree programs and receive ACEND approval for the academic C&PIs should experience no changes to their application and admission practices. This ACEND service has been developed primarily to provide stand-alone DIs that are unable to affiliate with a master's degree program with an option to continue their operation. We also anticipate that this service should provide second-degree students with significant savings in tuition and time spent in school by supporting their prior educational and work experience. And for international students, this service may be the door for entry into dietetics, a gateway that has often been unattainable.

*Is there a benefit for MS + DI programs to remain MS+DI instead of transitioning to a CP?*

*ACEND Response:* This remains for the program to decide based on ability to increase enrollment, provide a strong curriculum, attract students, and maximize efficiency if a MS/DI would like to transition to a CP. If a program is interested in transitioning to the competency-based education model now, the Future Education Model incentives for reorganizing into a Graduate Program will remain in place through the last application cycle which will be accepted until one month prior to the 2027 standards are released, anticipated for Fall 2026. and MS/DI programs are encouraged to apply before the deadline. One of the benefits includes waiver of the annual fee for one year.

## Questions Pertaining to the Bridge Programs

*Is the bridge meant to "bridge" between those who do and do not have a DPD VS?*

*ACEND Response:* Post-baccalaureate students who do not have a DPD verification statement would still need to obtain a DPD verification statement before entering a DI program. The bridge program is intended mostly for those with a DPD VS to assist them in achieving the C&PIs within the graduate curriculum and designated to be completed in an academic setting.

*Our DI is in an academic setting but it is a community college and we do not offer a master's degree at the college. Am I able to create the bridge program myself and have the interns take them?*

*ACEND Response:* Only graduate level academic institutions can meet the graduate level academic C&PIs. A community college would not be able to offer the graduate level bridging curriculum.

*For the skill-based competencies that are currently being considered to be met at the academic level (injections, interpreting imaging, placing tubes) if the DI within a medical center works with their sim lab to offer a structured didactic course with assessment methods would it be possible to have part of bridge outside of an academic setting? This would be more cost effective/time saving to the intern.*

*ACEND Response:* Thank you for your excellent suggestion. At this time, ACEND foresees the bridge programs or graduate degrees approved as bridge programs to cover the designated graduate academic competencies. Depending on its success, expanding its scope may provide an advantage to dietetics programs and students. We will share your suggestion with the Expanded Standards Committee for consideration.

*Can the bridging module be completed as part of summer coursework prior to the DI starting or can the bridging module be completed concurrently while the student is in the dietetic internship.*

*ACEND Response:* Bridge programs are intended to be flexible and may be completed during the summer, in the evening, using a compressed format, or online. In addition, they may be completed before, during, or after starting the internship.

*Questions were asked about the PhD-ISPP and if the PAL service with the bridge option would work for the PhD applicants*

*ACEND Response:* In the proposed 2027 Standards the ISPP option for PhD applicants will no longer be available. Similar to international students, PhD applicants can greatly benefit from ACEND's PAL service to streamline their entry into dietetics. Furthermore, under the 2027 Standards, CPs may review applicants with a doctorate degree within their typical admissions criteria.

### **Timeline of Bridge Programs:**

*Does the master's now need to be completed prior to the internship starting?*

*ACEND Response:* As with the 2022 Standards, the 2027 Standards will not specify when the graduate degree may be completed. The master's program may be completed before, during, or after the start of the internship.

*Is the expectation for a student to finish their graduate bridge requirements at the same time as unpaid supervised practice?*

*ACEND Response:* The DPD verification statement must be secured prior to starting the dietetic internship. On the other hand, the master's program and/or the graduate level bridge program may be completed before, during, or after the start of the internship.

*What about for those students that start our DI in 2026 but will graduate in 2028. Will the student need to show evidence of completing these new competencies and PI's?*

*ACEND Response:* Students who begin a program are entitled to complete the curriculum that was in place at the time of their enrollment. A program may update the curriculum while making every effort possible not to impact the students' education pathway or completion requirements during the transition.

*Will DIs still going to be bound by the 80% standard for 150% program completion? If students can enroll in a bridge program at the same time as a DI, I would anticipate program completion delays if the students takes longer to successfully meet the bridge program competencies than anticipated.*

*ACEND Response:* Under the 2022 Standards, interns are required to complete a master's degree prior to receiving their DI verification statement. This requirement has not negatively impacted programs' ability to meet their program completion objectives. The same requirement will remain in place under the 2027 Standards, and we anticipate that programs will continue to meet their completion targets. As always, ACEND will closely monitor program outcomes and, if necessary, will adjust its standards or expected target measures to ensure continued student success.

### **Questions Pertaining to the PAL Service**

*Will the PAL service only apply to academic competencies or would students also be able to apply this to practicum focused CRDNs?*

*ACEND Response:* At this time, ACEND's bridge program will only focus on the designated graduate academic C&PIs; on the other hand, ACEND's PAL service will extend to the practicum focused C&PIs. This means that ACEND will assess the applicants' experiences (e.g., work, practicum) and determine if they met any C&PIs through these professional experiences. The DI program can decide if they will accept ACEND's assessment considering recency and program's requirements.

*Will ACEND PAL provide options as far as guiding towards DIs that require a MS before starting the DI program vs those that allow concurrent or after?*

*ACEND Response:* While the details of this proposal continue to be clarified, ACEND anticipates that the website listings will provide many of the details with the ability to search for specific program characteristics. In addition, based on the need, we anticipate developing handouts, checklists, and other support materials to guide applicants through the process.

*Will PAL review be able to assist international students as well?*

*ACEND Response:* Yes, the PAL review will be able to assist international students, including reviewing and analyzing their international credential evaluation education documentation such as that provided by agencies such as WES (World Education Service). The vision is for ACEND to guide international students on all the required steps during this process.

*If ACEND can approve graduate level PAL and bridge programs for students who are not pursuing the GP/CP, why can't it also approve undergraduate level PAL and bridge programs for those who didn't complete a DPD?*

*ACEND Response:* Many DPD programs already have provide an abbreviated course of study for applicants who already have a bachelor's degree, to focus on the ACEND knowledge requirements. There is no need to approve undergraduate PAL bridge programs. If DPDs wish to utilize the ACEND PAL service as part of their admission requirements for second career students, they are welcome to do this.

#### **Questions about Cost to Students (PAL Service) and to Programs (Approval of Bridge Programs):**

*How much will the PAL service cost the student? Will our accreditation fees be increased to reflect the added work?*

*ACEND Response:* ACEND is currently in the early stages of developing the PAL service process. We anticipate that students who request the PAL service will incur a fee. This fee is intended to cover the administrative costs associated with delivering the service and to ensure that the added workload does not impact accreditation fees for our programs. We expect the cost to be reasonable and aligned with the scope of support provided. Importantly, we believe that this collaborative effort between ACEND and its programs will result in meaningful cost savings for students by helping to avoid unnecessary coursework and practicum duplications.

*What is the cost to programs to have their bridge program verified and approved by ACEND? And if we have multiple MS degrees, do we have to pay over and over?*

*ACEND Response:* ACEND is currently in the early stages of developing the bridge program process. Once the fee structure is reviewed and approved by the ACEND Board, it will be shared with programs. While details are still being developed, ACEND anticipates implementing a reasonable fee that will not place a financial burden on programs seeking bridge program approval. As a non-profit organization, ACEND is committed to setting a fee structure that supports a balanced budget and covers the administrative costs of the function—without generating profit from our participating programs.

*If a DI program requires a MS and DPD VS statement as an admission requirement, will they have to pay ACEND to review/approve if that is what they already do?*

**ACEND Response:** Under the proposed 2027 Standards, a DI program can require the DPD verification statement, along with a master's degree from a program that has been approved by ACEND as a bridge program. As long as the master's degree has been approved by ACEND neither the DI nor the applicant will need to connect with ACEND.

### **Questions Regarding Program's Freedom to Accept ACEND's PAL Reports**

*How will ACEND partner with DI programs housed within an academic institution? For example, if the academic institution feels a course needs to be repeated, but ACEND does not.*

**ACEND Response:** ACEND does not interfere with a program's decision to pass or fail students or determine if a course or several courses need to be repeated. ACEND's PAL service is intended to provide a report similar to the report by agencies that evaluate international credential evaluation education such as WES (World Education Service). As with these evaluation services, the ACEND PAL report is provided to the student, and it remains up to the program to accept or reject any determination by ACEND. Programs have the expertise to set student assessment and evaluate students based on these assessments. As long as the program is following its policies, it is outside ACEND's purview to be involved in program's determination of student competence.

*My preceptors recently voiced concerns about recency of education. We noticed a knowledge-gap between graduates who finished their DPD within 1 year vs those who waited >1 year to apply. I say this in hopes ACEND ensures MNT is completed relatively soon before a practicum/internship's start.*

*Where does recency policy fit into this?*

**ACEND Response:** Recency of education is a program's decision.

*If programs can override ACEND's review of a student's courses, this seems like it will cause even more confusion for students.*

**ACEND Response:** ACEND cannot dictate to its institutions what courses or competencies to accept and which meet the institution's definition of quality. ACEND's PAL report should be no different than any other credential evaluation education documentation such as WES report. Programs are always able to make the final decision on what is acceptable according to their policies.

*What if a student is completing a stand alone DI that is partnered with an MS that already covers all of the grad academic competencies?*

**ACEND Response:** ACEND encourages any master's program that already covers all of the graduate academic competencies to obtain approval from ACEND as a bridge program. DI programs can always recommend to their DPD applicants to complete an ACEND-approved master's bridge program without the need for contacting ACEND.

*If an academic institution has a DPD and then a MS (which covers the required academic competencies)/DI, does the student need to involve ACEND?*

**ACEND Response:** ACEND encourages any master's program that already covers the designated graduate academic competencies to obtain approval from ACEND as a bridge program. A DPD graduate who completes an ACEND-approved master's bridge program can directly apply to a DI or CP program without the need to contact ACEND.

### **Competencies and Performance Indicators Designated for the Academic Setting**

*How and who is deciding which competencies are to be accomplished in the academic setting?*

**ACEND Response:** The decision is based on several factors and iterations. The Expanded Standards Committee (ESC) which is composed of faculty from all ACEND program types, students, practitioners, and public members, set the draft list of competencies that are designated for the academic setting. The results from the recent survey completed by Dietetic Internship program directors are being used to confirm the list of competencies to be completed in academia. For example, the competencies on nutrition imaging and injections were rated below a 3.0 over 5.0 in terms of feasibility for DI programs to meet them in the practice setting. This confirmed the ESC's decision to place these competencies in the academic setting to ensure that students are graduating with the foundational knowledge to perform these skills. Furthermore, many free-standing DIs commented on the difficulties they would face in meeting the research competencies. Again, this confirmed the ESC's decision to place the research competencies in the academic setting where students will be guided by faculty with research expertise to graduate entry-level practitioners with strong research skills.

*For the new CRDNs at the graduate level (Epi, Nutrition Genomics etc.), how DI programs will make sure the students meet these CRDNs? Many of our preceptors and sites may not be able to offer experiential experiences in these areas. This may limit student placement.*

**ACEND Response:** In the proposed 2027 Standards, DI programs will not be responsible for these C&PIs that are designated for the academic setting. DI programs will only be responsible for meeting the C&PIs designated for supervised practice. Master's programs and academic institutions that wish to offer bridge programs and modules will undergo ACEND review and approval of the academic C&PIs and will be responsible for meeting these C&PIs.

*Will the academic competencies truly be "academic in nature" or at the knows level? Or will the competencies be at the shows/does level?*

**ACEND Response:** The designated academic C&PIs will be a mix of Knows, Shows and Does depending on the subject of study. For example, introductory and foundational subjects that are new to the standards will more likely be at the Knows and Shows level. Other subjects that require demonstration of competence, such as research and program evaluation, are expected to include C&PIs at the Does level.

*About how many competencies are we looking at that programs would need to meet to be approved?*

*ACEND Response:* The number of competencies and performance indicators will not be finalized until after the public comment period.

*If we have a clear process to identify competencies at the graduate level for academic institutions, can these same competencies support appropriate curriculum mapping for CP/GP and alignment to faculty with terminal degrees rather than tying the terminal degree to the program director who may not even be the one teaching these competencies.*

*ACEND Response:* The requirement for the program director of CP programs to have a doctorate degree is not limited to teaching the curriculum. Mentoring students, developing the curriculum, and providing overall leadership to the program are of the essence to support the academic program.

### **Other Questions**

*When will the master's from approved programs be required?*

*ACEND Response:* The 2027 Standards are anticipated to be released Fall 2026 for voluntary adoption. Meeting any requirements within the 2027 Standards will not be enforced until they are in effect after June 1, 2027.

*Is there a scenario in which the clinical skills competencies can be fulfilled online? Or must they be done in person, in a hands-on lab or actual clinical setting?*

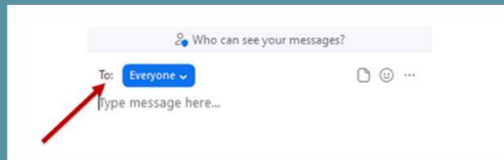
*ACEND Response:* ACEND does not dictate or specify which C&PIs may be completed in person or online. This remains up to the program as long as the quality of the curriculum and the experiences provided to students are maintained.

*Why can't the DI program be called Dietetic Residency?*

*ACEND Response:* The concept of a dietetic residency mirrors that of dietetic internship and implies a model where students receive compensation—similar to medical residencies where doctors are paid during their training.

# Welcome!

- Lines have been muted.
- If you have questions or comments, use the chat feature and post to EVERYONE.
- To enable closed captioning, select **Show Captions** icon **CC** from the meeting controls toolbar.



ACEND

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## Using Chats During ACEND Town Hall



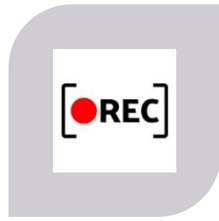
ACEND encourages attendees to use the chat feature to ask questions and express their opinions respectfully



At any point, ACEND reserves the right to remove an attendee from the Town Hall for inappropriate or harassing comments

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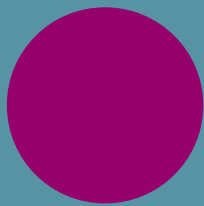
This webinar is being  
recorded



The slides and recording  
will be shared on the  
ACEND webpage



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## ACEND Announcements and Updates



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## Competency Software: Programs Using Trajecsyst and Google Classroom (Education License)



- ACEND is seeking volunteers to work with EMS for establishing integration with:
  - Google Classroom with educational license
  - Trajecsyst
- Please contact [education@eatright.org](mailto:education@eatright.org) if you wish to support ACEND in this process.

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## ACEND Standards DEI Revisions

- In line with federal regulations
- Ensure consistency in decision making
- Give programs flexibility

Comment period until September 29

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## NEW Resource for Program Completion Objective

- Optional spreadsheet template
- Video tutorials:
  - How to use the template
  - How to use data from template for PEP and annual report

If you have questions, contact your ACEND manager



[Home](#) > [ACEND](#) > [Program Directors](#) > [ACEND Portal](#)

### ACEND Portal

Welcome to the ACEND<sup>®</sup> Portal! This portal is intended for:

- Program directors from ACEND-accredited programs, and
- Active ACEND program reviewers who have been appointed and trained by ACEND

To log in, please click the red button below and follow the prompts to enter your eatrightPRO credentials. This will give you access to the ACEND portal.

If your credentials do not work, please contact the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics [Member Services Center](#) or 800/877-1600 x 5000 for assistance resetting your username or password.

Download the portal instructions for:

- [Program Directors](#)
- [Program Reviewers](#)

[Access ACEND Portal](#)

#### Annual Report Resources and Videos

Student Loan Section for DI Programs

The video below provides directions for completing the student loan section for DI programs.

- [How to Fill Out the Student Loans Section](#)

#### Program Completion Calculation Statistics Section

The spreadsheet below is recommended for the Program Completion Statistics Section. Additionally, several videos are available to provide guidance when using the spreadsheet.

- [Program Completion Calculation Spreadsheet](#)

##### How-to Videos for Program Completion Calculation Spreadsheet

- [How to Complete the Program Completion Calculation Spreadsheet for Single Cohort \(All Program Types Except APDs\)](#)
- [How to Complete the Program Completion Calculation Spreadsheet for Multi-Cohort \(All Program Types Except APDs\)](#)
- [How to Use the Program Completion Calculation Spreadsheet to Complete the Annual Report \(All Program Types Except APDs\)](#)
- [How to Use the Program Completion Calculation Spreadsheet to Complete the PEP \(All Program Types Except APDs\)](#)

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## ACEND Fall 2025 Updates



### Annual Report

Initial reminder email sent on September 9<sup>th</sup>

**Due date: November 21<sup>st</sup>**



### Annual Fee

Initial reminder email sent on September 11<sup>th</sup>

**Due date: December 8<sup>th</sup>**



[Home](#) > [ACEND](#) > [ACEND Public Notices and Announcements](#) >

### ACEND Updates

The ACEND Update is ACEND's monthly newsletter aimed at providing programs with deadline reminders, training opportunities and updates to standard interpretation and policies. The newsletters for 2025 are available below.

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# November 12-13, 2025 Virtual Program Director Workshop

## Program Directors: Additional Training Opportunities

[Home](#) > [ACEND](#) > [Program Directors](#) >

### Program Directors

This section provides resources for program directors to help maintain ACEND accreditation to access the ACEND Portal, Application Process and more.

Additional [training opportunities for program directors](#) are available.

#### Popular Resources for ACEND Program Directors

To assist programs on the accreditation process, ACEND offers the following resources:



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## Dietetic Internships Under the 2027 Standards with Graduate- Level Competencies

Rayane AbuSabha, PhD, RD  
Executive Director, ACEND



©istock.com

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## Clarification from September 16 Town Hall

### Doctoral Degree for Program Directors (PDs)

- Does **NOT** apply to Associate, DT, DPD or DI programs
  - Only impacts 55 current PDs of CPs and GPs
- Doctorate in any field- PhD, DCN, EdD, Dr.PH, etc.
- Existing PDs have > 10 years until June 1, 2037 to obtain
- Requirement only for the PD and not other faculty



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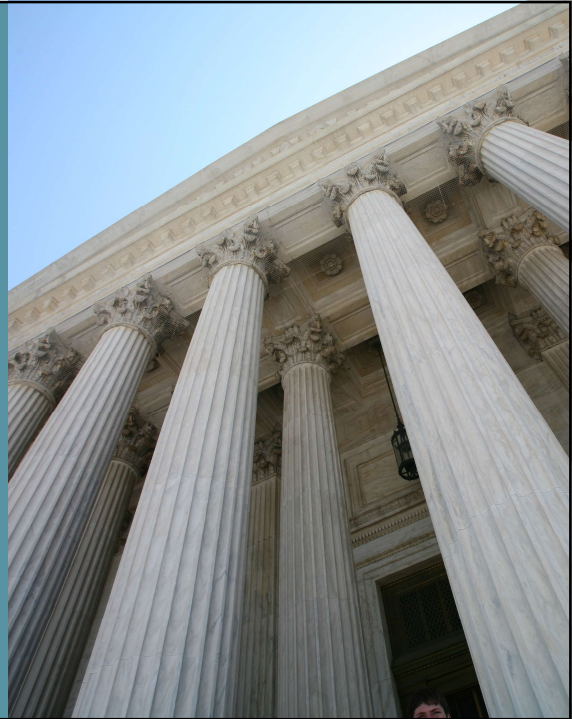


Core Definition (§1001(a)) for institution of higher education under USDE

Criteria #3 requires that the academic institution must offer

1. A bachelor's degree, or
2. A 2 year program acceptable for full credit toward such a degree, or
3. A degree acceptable for admission to a graduate or professional degree program

DI programs are post baccalaureate professional programs and not recognized as academic institutions



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DIs are postbaccalaureate practicum standards

**cannot**

- award a degree
- offer academic content



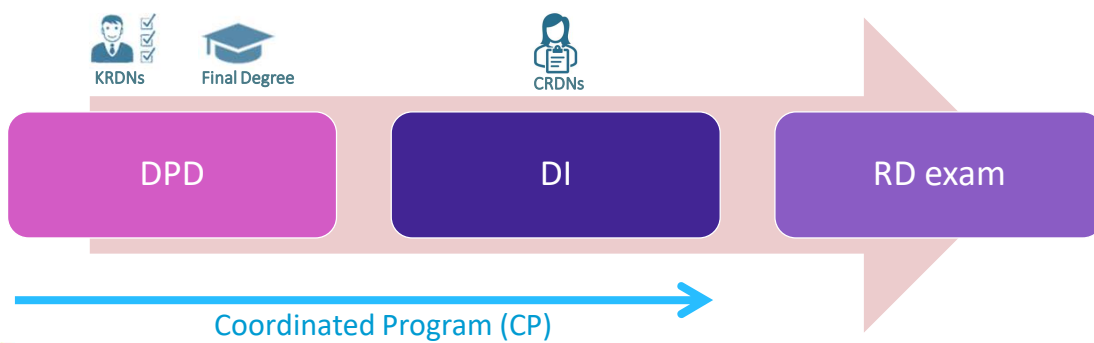
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### (1) RDN at Bachelor's Level

(2) 2022 Standards knowledge & competencies (KRDNs/CRDNs) written at the Bachelor's (BS) Level

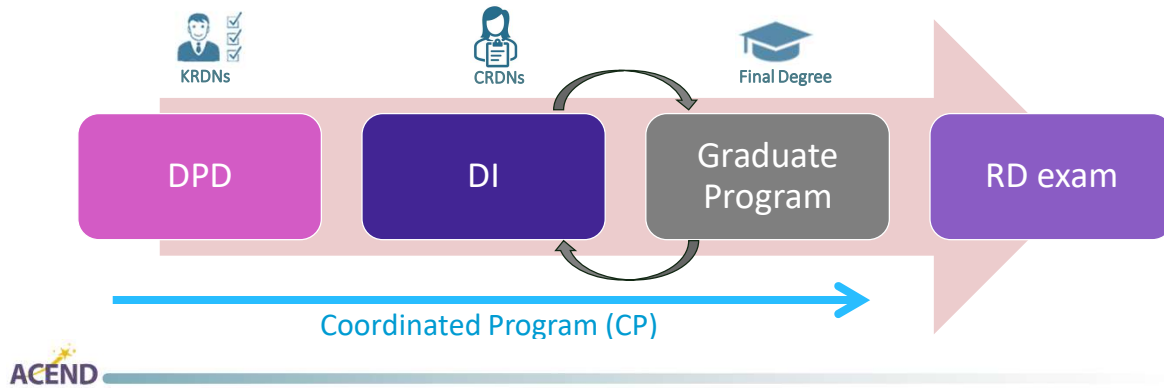


**ACEND**

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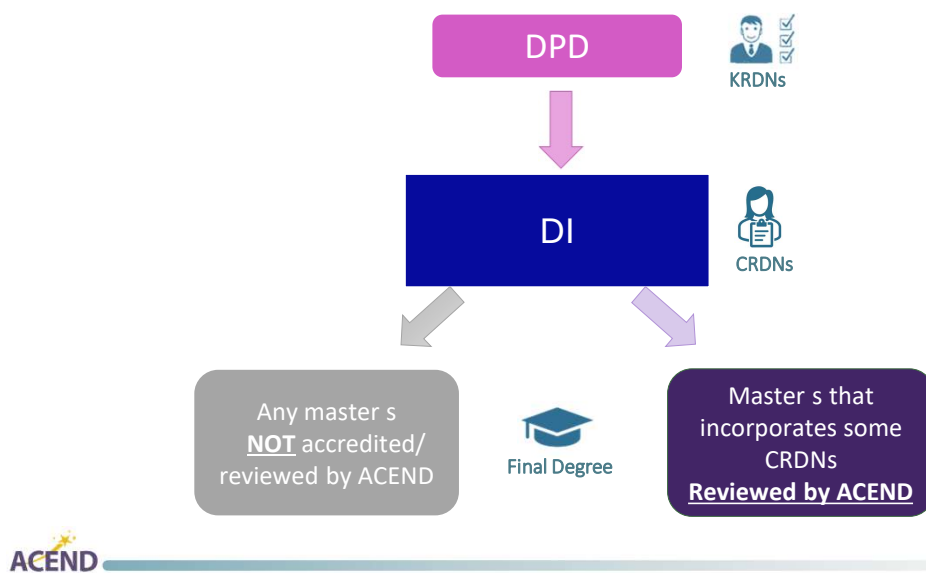
## (1) RDN at Master's Level

(2) 2022 Standards competencies (KRDNs/CRDNs) written at the Bachelor's (BS) Level



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## 2022 Standards: How DIs meet the graduate degree requirement



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**In the 2027 Standards,**  
ACEND competencies are written at the  
Master's Level with some content that must  
be covered in an academic setting

Competencies Include Concepts such as:



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## Proposed Designated Academic Competencies

Designated Academic Competencies	
C1.1	Apply epidemiology concepts and evidence to evaluate the relationship between diet and disease development
C1.2	Apply knowledge of nutrition, health promotion, and disease prevention for populations
C1.3	Use program planning steps to develop, implement, monitor, and evaluate community and population programs
C2.5	Incorporate genetic data into a personalized nutrition plan
C5.1	Incorporates critical thinking skills in practice
C5.2	Conduct research utilizing appropriate scientific design and methods
C5.4	Use technology and devices to enhance practice

Additional Performance Indicators, especially for the clinical skills such as swallow assessment, injections, nutrition imaging, and others

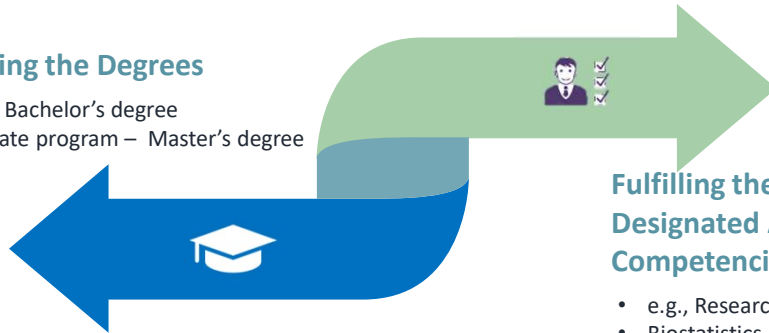


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## Under the 2027 Standards, DIs cannot meet:

### Awarding the Degrees

- DPD – Bachelor's degree
- Graduate program – Master's degree



### Fulfilling the Designated Academic Competencies

- e.g., Research
- Biostatistics
- Pharmacology
- Genetics
- Epidemiology



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## The college/university must be responsible for ACEND academic requirements

- Award the degree
- Fulfill the Academic Competencies

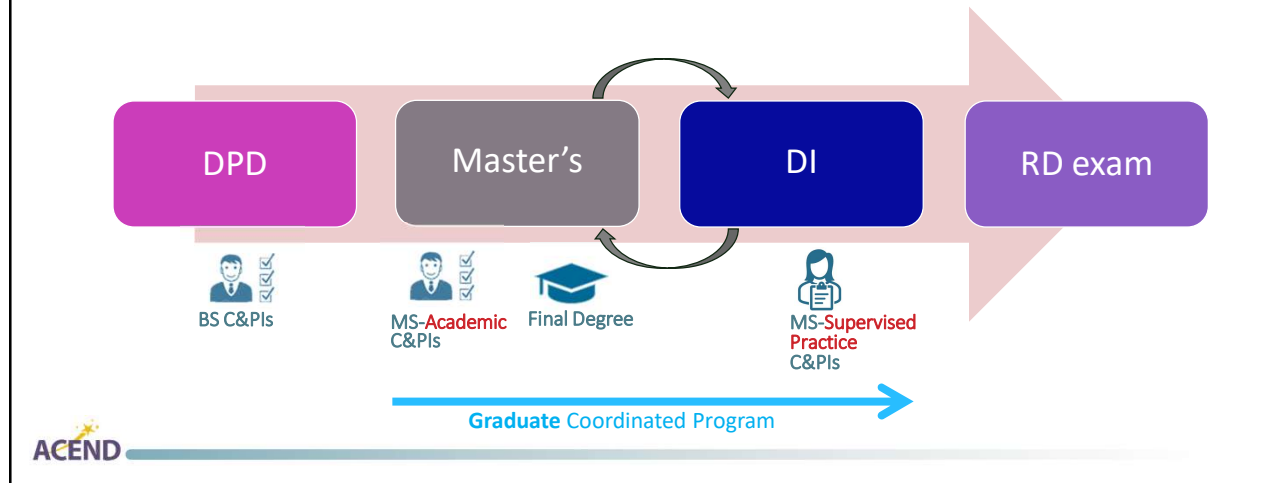


©Nathan Dumlao @ Unsplash.com

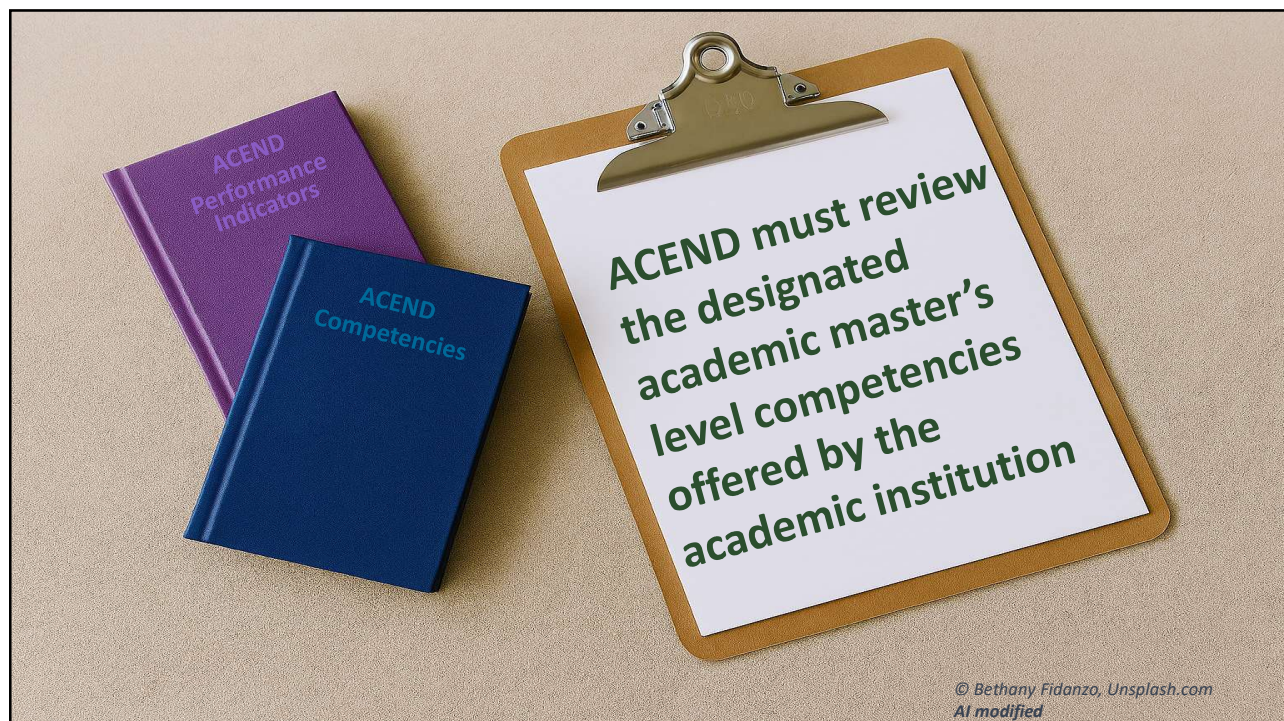
22

## (1) RDN at Master's Level

(2) 2027 Standards competencies (C&PIs) written at the graduate Level

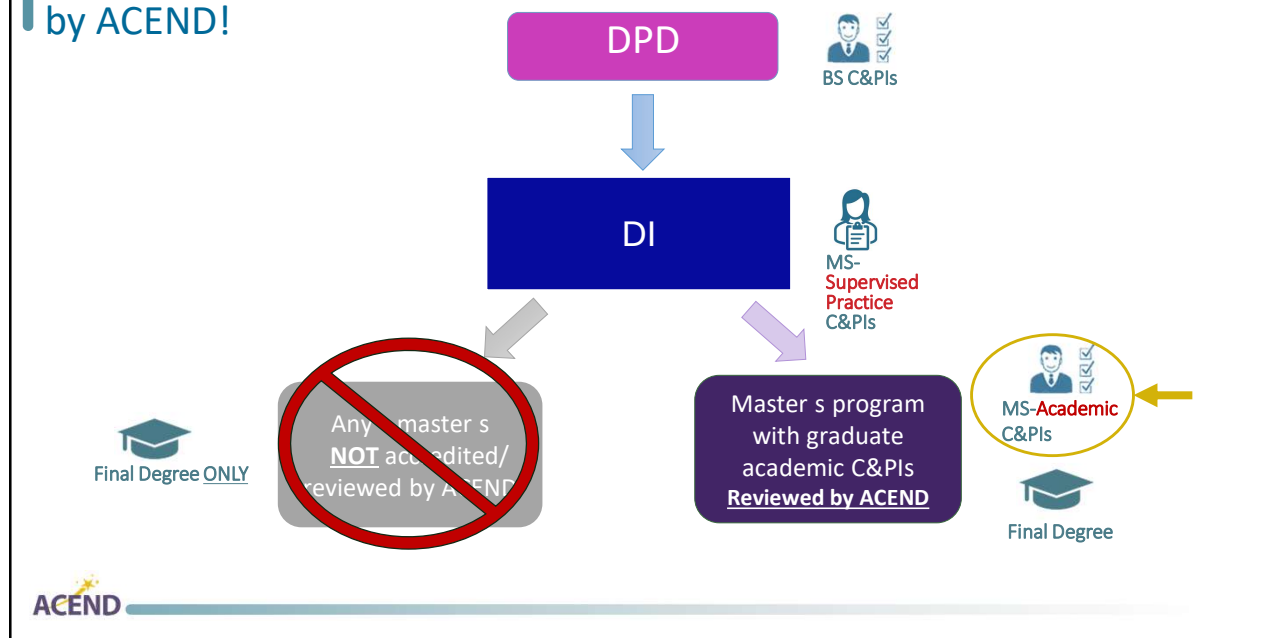


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**2027 Standards:** Academic graduate program must be reviewed by ACEND!



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## POLL:

What Should the New Name of the DI Standards Be?

**Note:** this does not impact the name of your program if you wish to continue to call it DI

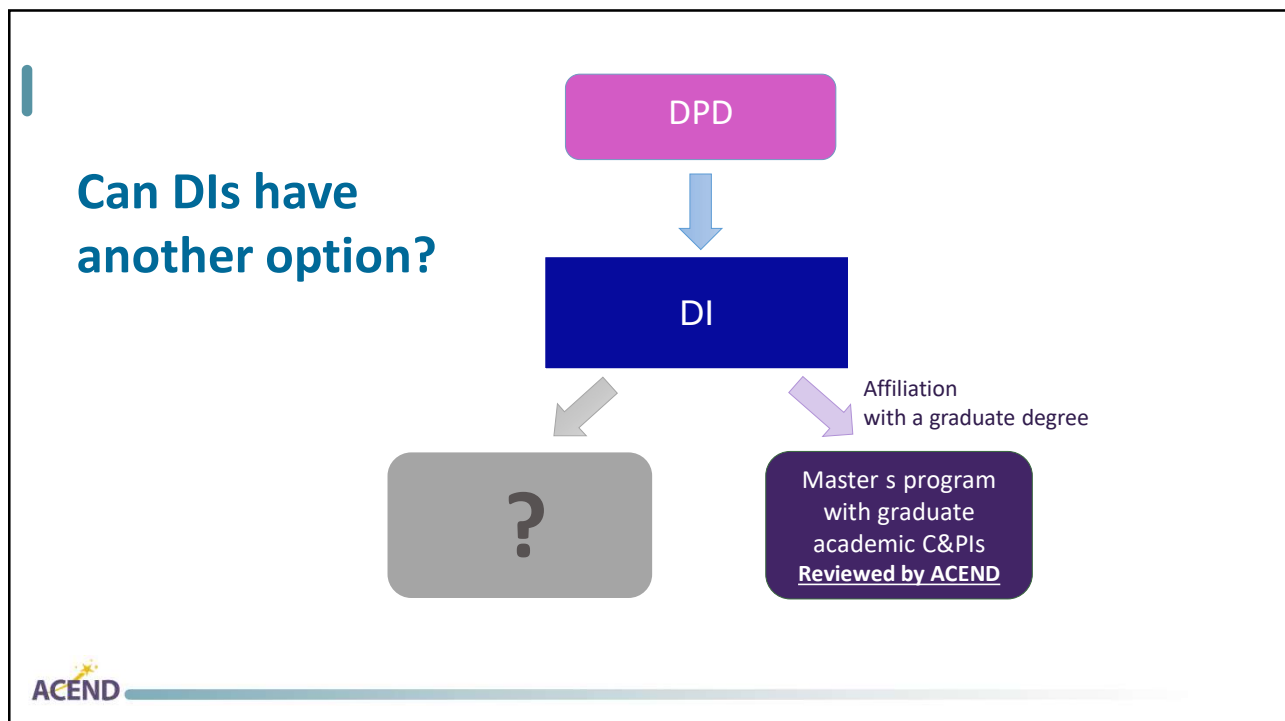
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- SPP Supervised Practice Program
- PP Practicum Program
- DPE Dietetics Practice Experience
- DP Dietetics Practicum
- PPD Professional Practicum in Dietetics

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## ACEND's Proposed Solution



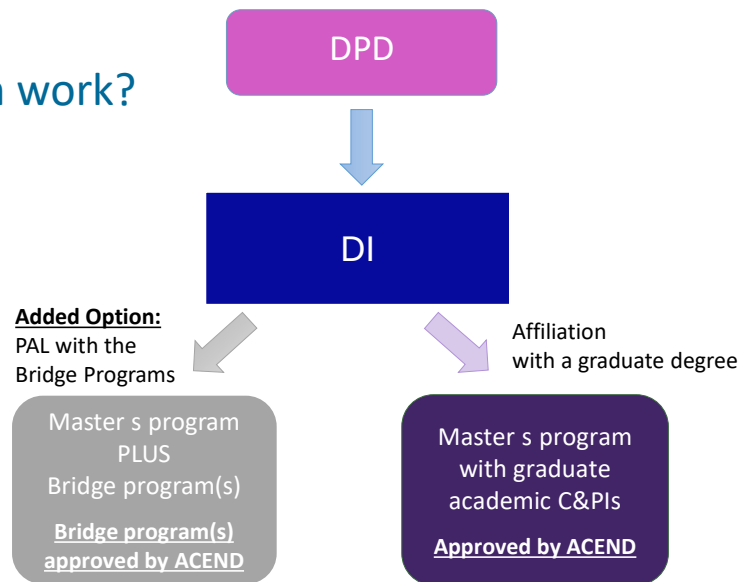
Bridge  
Program



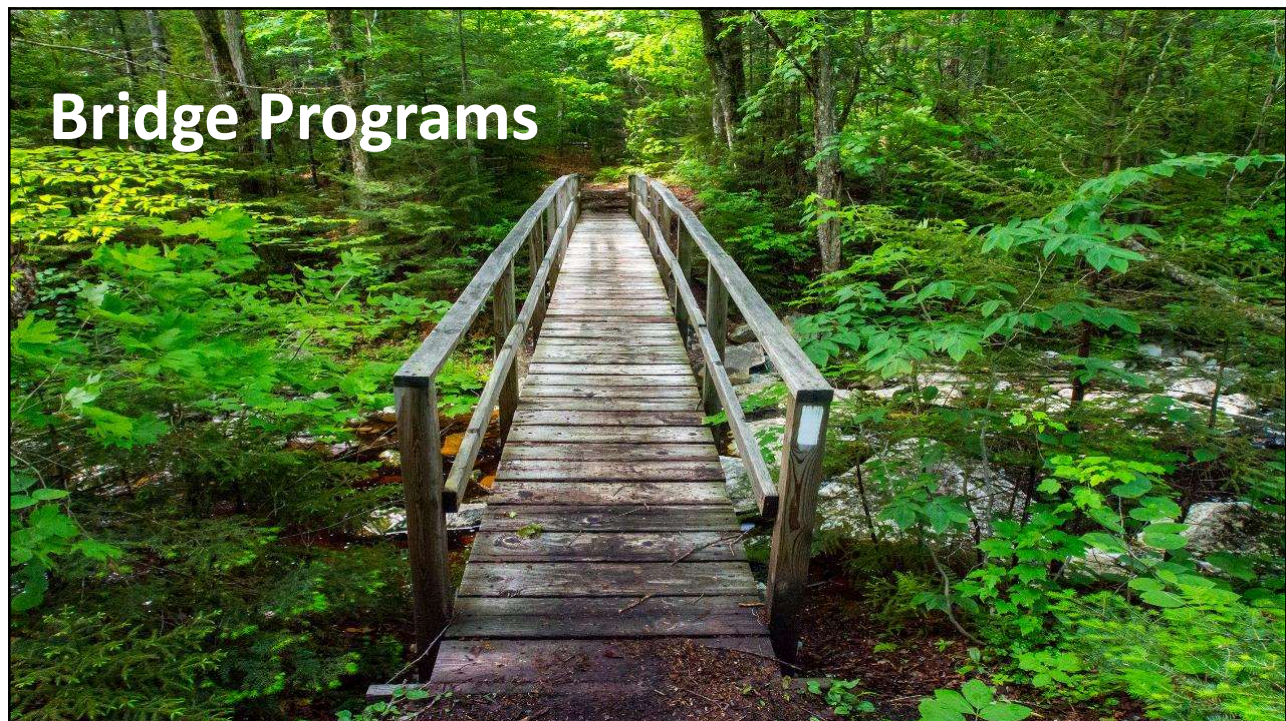
Prior Assessed  
Learning (PAL)

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## How does the bridging option work?



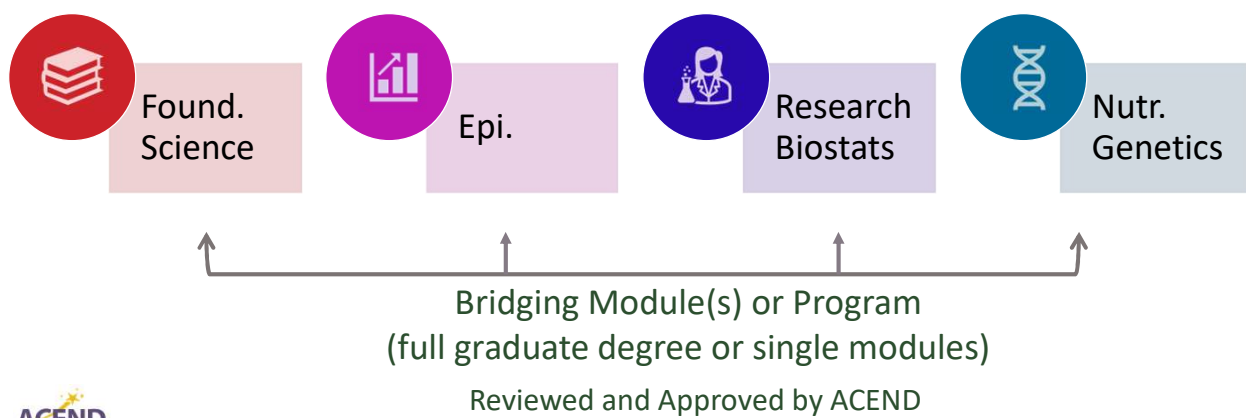
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## Examples of Graduate Level Subjects Designated for Academic Setting

Examples of content to meet competencies:



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## Benefits of Bridge Programs with ACEND's PAL Service- Students

- 1 Faster Pathway (shorter and more concise)
- 2 Cost Effective (lower tuition)
- 3 Targeted Learning (focus on gaps)
- 4 Flexible Format
- 5 Recognition of Prior Learning and Experience

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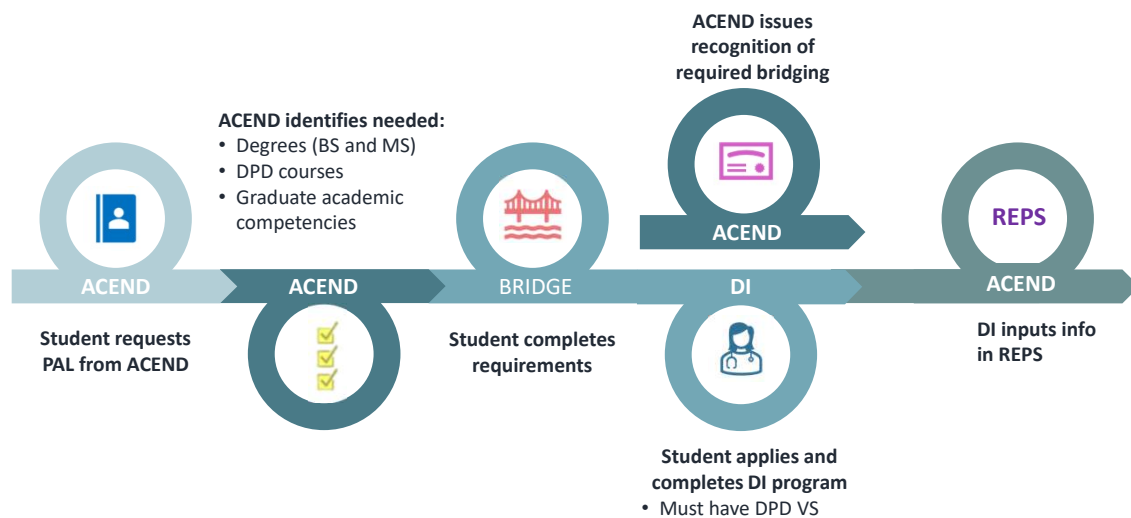
## Benefits of Bridge Programs with ACEND's PAL Service- Programs

- 1 Provide free standing DIs another option
- 2 Provide all programs potential sources of enrollment
- 3 Ensure consistency of decision making across programs
- 4 ACEND's PAL service eases PD workload
- 5 Facilitate students' alternative pathways into programs



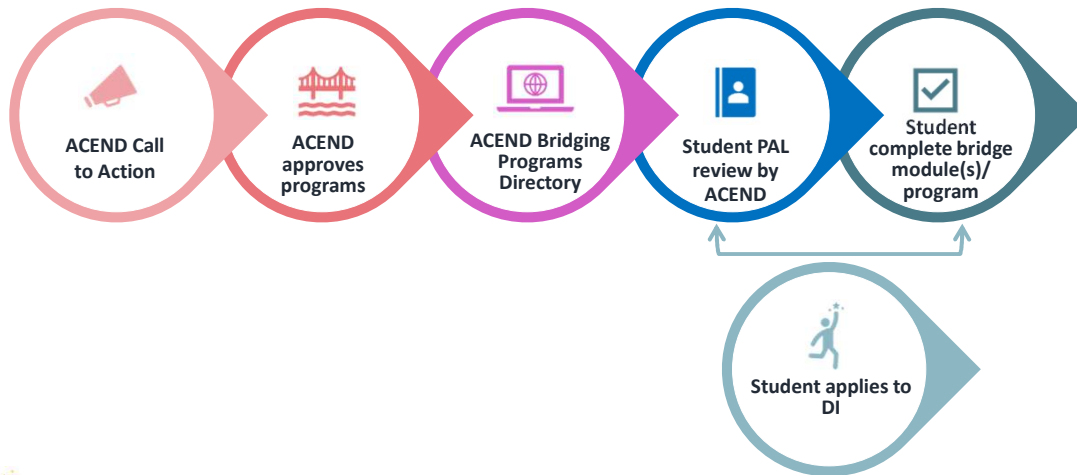
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## Easier for Students: One-Stop Shop



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## Begins with a Call to Action to Academic Institutions



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## Academic Institutions that Can Apply for the Designated Academic Curriculum or the Bridge Program/Module(s)

### Graduate Programs

- Graduate ACEND programs
- **Any** master's or doctoral program

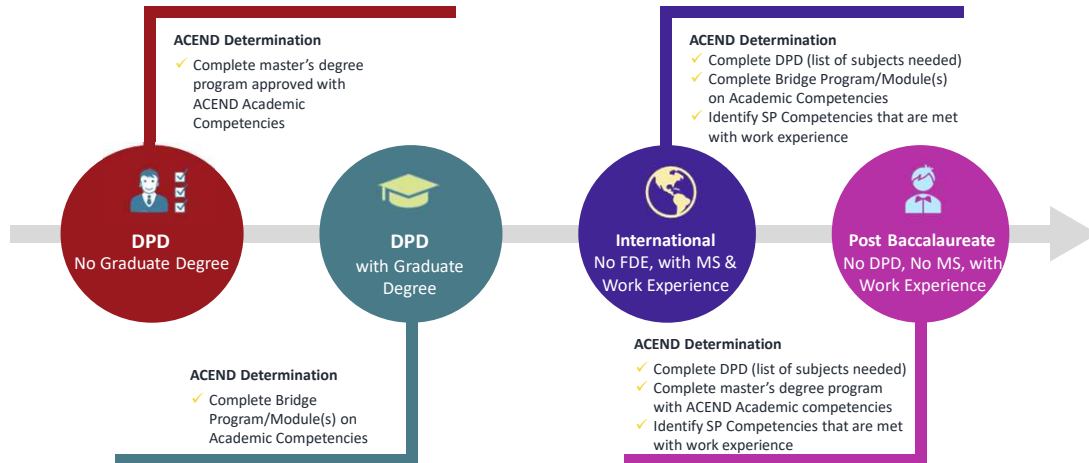
### Academic Health Care Facilities

- Academic Hospitals
- Other **academic** facilities and centers



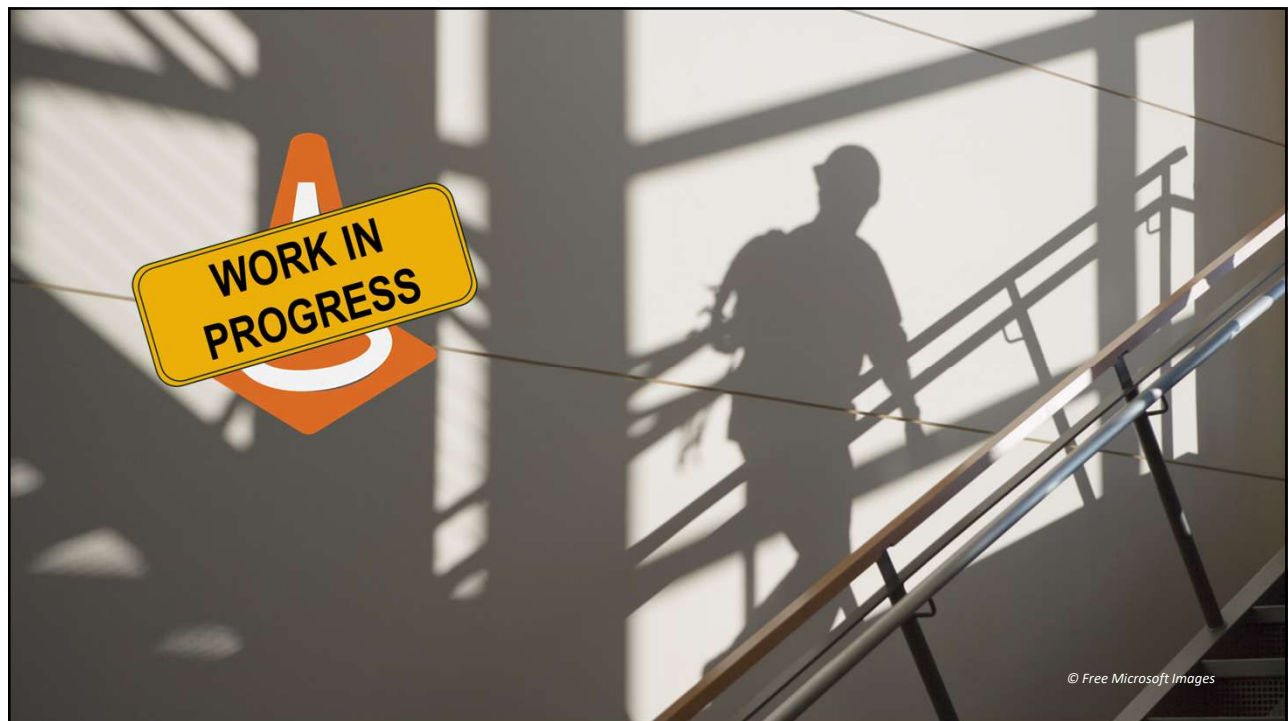
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## E.g. Pathways for Students – Takes the Guesswork from Programs

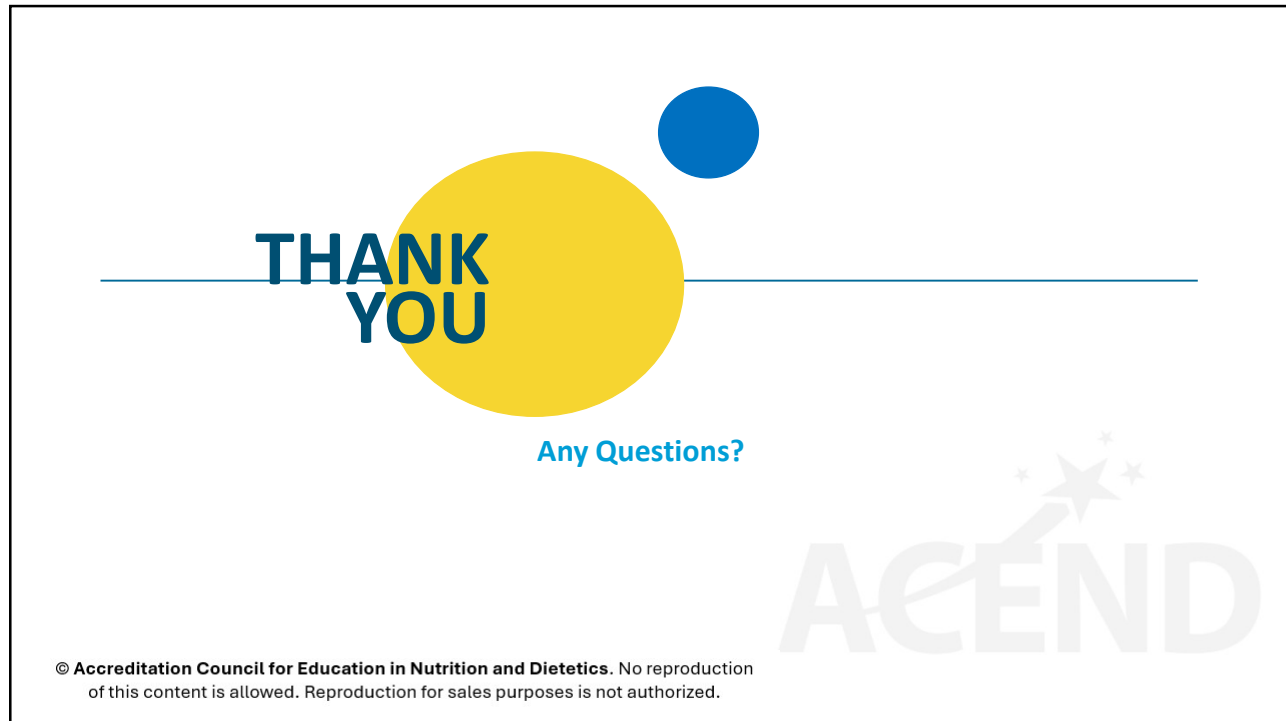


After ACEND PAL determination, student can enter CP or DI program

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THANK  
YOU

Any Questions?

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